

## History of the Patron Saint Festival in honor of Saint John the Baptist



The Festival of San Juan is the most important celebration in the district of Huariaca, Province of Pasco. This is why it is also known as the **Big Festival**. One of the reasons is that Saint John is the patron saint of the district. The celebrations in honor of the patron saint San Juan take place within the **Huariaca Tourist Week**. The festival takes place from June 22 to 27. According to what is said, it is said that the festival is very old and that it began when a man named Dionicio Mendoza offered the first mass to mark the beginning of the festivities and said mass was celebrated by a priest named Sanabria. The church where the Patron Saint of Huariaca is currently located is the new Mother Church of Huariaca.

The original church dates back to colonial times and was destroyed first by the Chileans who invaded Huariaca during the Pacific War and later by the fires and earthquake of the 1940s. The Big Festival takes place in different stages that are :

- The Wood Cutter or Firewood Splitter
- The ninth
- The Reception
- Dawn
- The Albazo
- The eve
- The Bathroom (Awakening)
- The Mass and Procession
- Band Presentation
- The Farewell (Ayhuallá) and
- Thankfulness.

**Chopping wood** is the initial activity of the San Juan Festival. To carry out this stage, it is necessary to fulfill the donations promised the previous year through Truka or Trukay. Truka is an ancient custom that consists of preparing breads that serve as coins of commitment. These breads are given at the end of the festival to the family and friends of the person in charge for the following year so that they can help him with what is necessary to carry out the festival. In this case, the wood cutter requires the donation of trees and labor to cut said firewood. Responsibility for this festival falls to three officials, one for each day of the festival. However, in this first stage of the festival, each official must take their commissions to the field to carry out this task. The commissions are made up of the firewood donors and the firewood cutters. This activity does not have a defined date for each official. However, all prepared firewood must remain in the official's house at least three months before the festival for its respective drying. To cut the firewood, the collaborators go to the field with their tools. These works are carried out under the supervision of the Mandador, who is in charge of the official. This character participates in all the events of the celebration. To carry out this activity, drinks are prepared such as chicha de jora and the typical chinguiritos, which are hot cane liquor drinks with aromatic herbs. They even bring musicians to liven up this activity. The cutting of firewood is done in a single day and cannot be postponed. Once the firewood has been cut, the participants return to the official's house and put the firewood away.



**The ninth;** Nine days before the Big Festival, the novenas begin, which include masses and sermons. The novenantes, who are not officials, are in charge of carrying out this stage of the festival. These novenantes have also been committed since the previous year.

**The Reception** ; Two days before the Big Festival, that is, on June 22, the Reception takes place, which is the third stage of this festivity. The Reception is also known as the Entrance of the Bands. The reception of the bands takes place on the

afternoon of June 22 and it is the official, together with the Commander and the support staff, who are in charge of this task.

They all go to the meeting point where the band will arrive. This can be the door of the San Juan Bautista School or in front of the Social Security Hospital. The band is welcomed with warm brandy. Then, support personnel, friends and the general public accompany the band to the main square where the Mother Church is located and in it the image of San Juan Bautista. They accompany the arrival of the band with many rockets that are launched into the air. After greeting the patron saint by the official in the company of the band, we proceed to greet the authorities and all the collaborators who have committed themselves to the official. Once this is over, they go to visit the house of the three officials.



**Dawn;** On the 23rd at five in the morning, the traditional dawn is held, which consists of the delivery of bottles of brandy and the traditional punch to the entire public that gathers in the houses of the three mayordomos. Likewise, before the delivery of punch and liquor, the butler of the party delivers the band (ribbon) to the next official who will hold the party next year, publicly promising it.



**The albazo;** On the same day, in the afternoon, the typical albazo is held, which consists of the burning of rockets and dolls that are previously displayed with the patron saint's clothing on the main streets of the district. This act is carried out by the three butlers one day before their main day.



**The eve;** At night (on the 23rd), the bands of musicians of the three officials gather in the main square, where the serenade of the first day official takes place to announce the arrival of the Big Festival. In the same way, the following butlers will perform this act on their respective eves.

**Bathroom;** The early morning of June 24 is called Rikchachicuy in Huariaca. At four in the morning, bands of musicians begin to play through the main streets, inviting the public to wake up. Next, the officials on the different days offer the entire attending population chinguiritos to combat the cold. If the current official already has his replacement, he accompanies him in all acts. At 6 in the morning the sacrifice begins, consisting of swimming from one bank to the other of the Huallaga River, also called San Juan or Huariaca.



#### **The Mass and Procession;**

The mass of the first day begins at ten in the morning and is offered by the official of the first day. Once the religious service is over, the San Juan procession begins and continues until the afternoon. Then, the Commander invites the attendees to go to the official's house on the first day to serve the corresponding lunch, which may consist of a pachamanca, a spicy guinea pig and/or tripe, which is a preparation of minced meat with corn flavour. .

On the afternoon of June 24, the second mayordomo or second day performs the traditional albazo and at night his respective eve, as we already described above. Likewise, the next day (June 26), this official will perform his mass and procession, as he did on the first day, then inviting the attendees to his house, to taste the stew prepared that day. The Third Official will do the same on the 25th and 26th.

**Band Presentation;** On the 26th at night, the officials attend with their respective bands at the front of the Municipality, where the presentation of the musical bands of the respective mayordomos takes place, to the delight of the attending public. This event is promoted by the municipality of the district, where the municipal authorities pay tribute to the efforts of the mayordomos to carry out the patron saint's day, as well as encouraging the bands that brought joy to the Huariaqueño people with their melodies.



**The Farewell (Ayhuallá);** However, on the afternoon of the 27th, the Trukay takes place. The outgoing official must give the following year's official dozens of baskets of bread in the shape of giant dolls and galoshes. The new official is in charge of walking this Trukay and delivering the many wawas, urpay, roses, these breads as a form of commitment to family and friends so that they can help him fulfill his responsibility to the saint the following year. This help can range from donating beef, food, trees, holding masses to labor. At night, the Ayhuallá dance takes place where the public shouts: Ayhuallá! Ayhuallá! which means until next year and with this act the celebrations conclude until the following year.



**Thankfulness;** On the 28th, gratitude is carried out through a custom called Aycha Cuchuy, which means cut of meat. This is an activity that is carried out by the outgoing official and consists of distributing, among all the personnel who have supported him in carrying out the party, the meat, vegetables, breads and provisions that have been left over. This ceremony is performed privately and lasts until the afternoon. This is how the activities of the Great Festival of San Juan in Huariaca end.